
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO AGRICULTURE.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the State's
2 agricultural sector faces increasing challenges from climate
3 change, soil degradation, and the need for enhanced food
4 security and economic resilience. The legislature further finds
5 that the department of agriculture and biosecurity has expressed
6 concern regarding its capacity to administer conservation
7 agriculture and soil health incentive programs due to
8 limitations in technical expertise and staffing.

9 The legislature also finds that the climate change
10 mitigation and adaptation commission possesses land management
11 expertise, conservation planning capacity, and stewardship
12 responsibilities that align with the administration of
13 agricultural conservation and soil health programs. The
14 legislature additionally finds consolidating existing
15 conservation programs under the climate change mitigation and
16 adaptation commission will eliminate structural barriers that
17 prevent small and socially disadvantaged farmers from accessing



1 conservation incentives and improve administrative efficiency
2 and coordination of statewide agricultural conservation efforts.

3 Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to establish and
4 appropriate funds for the conservation agriculture and soil
5 health incentive program under the climate change mitigation and
6 adaptation commission.

7 SECTION 2. Chapter 225P, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
8 amended by adding a new section to be appropriately designated
9 and to read as follows:

10 "§225P- Conservation agriculture and soil health
11 incentive program; established; requirements; annual report.

12 (a) There is established within the commission a conservation
13 agriculture and soil health incentive program to provide
14 financial assistance and incentives, technical assistance, and
15 education that supports the adoption of science-based
16 conservation practices that improve soil health, water
17 retention, and climate resilience; increase the content of
18 organic matter in soil and carbon sequestration; reduce erosion,
19 nutrient runoff, and reliance on external inputs, including
20 synthetic fertilizers, imported feed, fossil fuels, and



- 1 globally-sourced raw materials; and support local food
2 production and economic viability. The program shall support:
- 3 (1) Equitable access for small and socially disadvantaged
4 farmers;
- 5 (2) First-time adopters of a one-time establishment
6 practice or annual management practice;
- 7 (3) Systemic agroecological transitions rather than input
8 substitution;
- 9 (4) Long-term maintenance and knowledge transfer of
10 farming practices that promote agricultural
11 conservation and soil health;
- 12 (5) Projects that incorporate traditional Native Hawaiian
13 ecological knowledge and ecocultural restoration; and
- 14 (6) Projects that generate co-benefits including jobs,
15 food security, water security, biodiversity gains, and
16 invasive species management.
- 17 (b) In administering the program, the commission shall:
- 18 (1) Subject to available funding, issue awards and other
19 financial incentives to promote the adoption,
20 application, and maintenance of a one-time
21 establishment practice and annual management practice



- 1 that advances conservation agriculture; provided that
2 the commission shall award no more than \$ to
3 an applicant; provided further that the commission:
- 4 (A) Shall require an applicant to adopt and maintain
5 a one-time establishment practice or annual
6 management practice for at least one year;
- 7 (B) May award enhanced assistance to first-time
8 adopters of a one-time establishment practice or
9 annual management practice; and
- 10 (C) May issue an award or other financial incentive
11 to an applicant providing farmer-to-farmer
12 mentorship;
- 13 (2) Subject to available funding, contract a public,
14 nonprofit, or private partner to provide technical
15 assistance to a program participant; provided that the
16 commission shall give priority to a partner who is
17 experienced in the State's farming conditions;
18 provided further that pre-application technical
19 assistance shall be available to a farmer at no cost;
- 20 (3) Upon the request of an applicant, furnish an
21 application in the applicant's primary language;



- 1 (4) Develop and maintain a database to track eligible
2 agricultural conservation practices, practitioners,
3 acres, and outcomes;
- 4 (5) Coordinate with the university of Hawaii and relevant
5 federal agencies to evaluate program outcomes; and
- 6 (6) Beginning January 1, 2028, review and update program
7 procedures every three years.

- 8 (c) The commission shall prioritize financial and
9 technical assistance for agricultural projects of no more than
10 fifty acres for beginning farmers, Native Hawaiian farmers, and
11 socially disadvantaged farmers.

- 12 (d) The commission shall submit an annual report of its
13 findings and recommendations, including any proposed
14 legislation, to the legislature no later than twenty days prior
15 to the convening of each regular session. The annual report
16 shall include equity and practice persistence metrics.

- 17 (e) The commission shall submit a comprehensive program
18 evaluation to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to
19 the convening of the regular session of 2028 and every three
20 years thereafter. The comprehensive program evaluation shall
21 include:



- 1 (1) Information detailing participation by farm type,
2 size, and demographics;
- 3 (2) Information detailing the adoption and maintenance
4 rate of any one-time establishment practice or annual
5 management practice;
- 6 (3) Economic and environmental outcomes;
- 7 (4) Recommendations for program improvement; and
- 8 (5) A comparison of the program to similar programs in
9 other states.
- 10 (f) The commission shall adopt rules pursuant to
11 chapter 91 for the purposes of this section.
- 12 (g) For the purposes of this section:
- 13 "Annual management practice" means cover cropping; crop
14 rotation and diversification; organic matter amendments,
15 including compost, biochar, and local inputs; rotational grazing
16 systems, efficient nutrient and water management; integrated
17 pest management; conservation tillage; and traditional Native
18 Hawaiian agricultural practices, including loi kalo restoration.
- 19 "One-time establishment practice" means reforestation and
20 agroforestry systems, including windbreaks, living barriers,
21 silviculture, and silvopasture; traditional Native Hawaiian



1 farming restoration; invasive species control and ecosystem
2 restoration; organic waste management and composting
3 infrastructure; water conservation systems; and soil and water
4 conservation structures.

5 "Program" means the conservation agriculture and soil
6 health incentive program."

7 SECTION 3. There is appropriated out of the general
8 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$ or so
9 much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2026-2027 for
10 the climate change mitigation and adaptation commission to
11 establish the conservation agriculture and soil health incentive
12 program.

13 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the climate
14 change mitigation and adaptation commission for the purposes of
15 this Act.

16 SECTION 4. New statutory material is underscored.

17 SECTION 5. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 3000.



Report Title:

Climate Change Mitigation and Adaption Commission; Conservation Agriculture and Soil Health Incentive Program; Agriculture; Technical Assistance; Reports; Appropriation

Description:

Establishes a Conservation Agriculture and Soil Health Incentive Program within the Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Commission. Requires an annual report to the Legislature. Appropriates funds. Effective 7/1/3000. (HD1)

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